

Slaughter Says Findings “Eliminate All Cause for Delay”

Rochester, NY – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28), the only microbiologist in Congress, today reacted to new findings that conclusively link strains of MRSA between humans and livestock. MRSA is a deadly bacterium that killed over 15,000 people in the US in 2008. More people in the US now die from hospital-acquired MRSA than from AIDS.

The Translational Genomics Research Institute [published a study](#) that conclusively links the routine use of antibiotics in food-animal production to deadly, antibiotic-resistant MRSA that can infect humans. The study demonstrated that the deadly strain of MRSA originated from a weaker bacteria strain that could be cured with antibiotics. Once in animals, the bacteria became resistant to antibiotics – likely as a result of routine antibiotic use in food-animal production. After developing antibiotic resistance in animals, this strain of MRSA then jumped to humans.

Slaughter said of the findings, “We know that the routine use of antibiotics in livestock can create antibiotic-resistant bacteria that can kill humans. This discovery eliminates all cause for delay- we must raise our livestock in a responsible and sustainable way. Every day that we continue the routine use of antibiotics on healthy animals is another day that we encourage the growth of deadly superbugs.”

In response to an inquiry from Slaughter, the Food and Drug Administration released data in 2010 that revealed that in the United States 80 percent of all antibiotics are used in food-animals, not humans. Since then, and in conjunction with a [rise of antibiotic-resistant bacteria](#), the practice of routinely feeding antibiotics has come under scrutiny.

Slaughter has been working on the overuse of antibiotics in livestock and subsequent antibiotic-resistant bacteria for years. Since 2007, Congresswoman Slaughter has been the author of legislation titled The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA), designed to ensure that we preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for the treatment of human disease. The legislation would prevent agricultural overuse of seven classes of antibiotics important for human health.

Last week, Slaughter [sent a letter to over 60 food companies](#) , including McDonalds, Kroger, Cargill and Walmart, requesting that each company disclose their policies on antibiotic use in meat and poultry production. Slaughter asked the companies to reply by June 15, 2012.

In December 2011, Slaughter hosted a briefing titled " [Keeping Antibiotics Working](#) " where farmers and successful businesses extolled the benefits of tapping into the growing domestic and international demand for antibiotic-free meat. The group urged congressional action to preserve antibiotics for the treatment of human diseases, an issue Slaughter has been working on for years.

[More information on PAMTA, including a list of the more than 300 organizations who have endorsed Slaughter's legislation is available here.](#)